

Year 2
Direct Support Professional Training

Resource Guide



Session #8

Teaching Strategies: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills

**Department of Education
and the
Regional Occupational Centers and Programs
in partnership with the
Department of Developmental Services**

2000

List of Class Sessions

Session	Topic	Time
1	Introduction and Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences	3 hours
2	Person-Centered Planning and Services	3 hours
3	Person-Centered Planning and Services	3 hours
4	Communication, Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution	3 hours
5	Positive Behavior Support: Understanding Behavior as Communication	3 hours
6	Positive Behavior Support: Adapting Support Strategies to Ensure Success	3 hours
7	Teaching Strategies: Personalizing Skill Development	3 hours
8	Teaching Strategies: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills	3 hours
9	Supporting Quality Life Transitions	3 hours
10	Wellness: Medication	3 hours
11	Wellness: Promoting Good Health	3 hours
12	Assessment	2 hours
Total Class Sessions		12
Total Class Time		35 hours

Key Words

In this session, the key words are:

- Meaningful Skills
- Age Appropriate
- Meaningful Teaching Materials
- Natural Outcomes
- Meaningful Teaching Plans
- Person-Centered
- Skill Maintenance

Information Brief

Review of Teaching Strategies for Personalizing Skill Development

Your Notes

Teaching age-appropriate skills and teaching skills in natural settings is a way to personalize learning activities for everyone. We have talked about a number of different teaching strategies for personalizing teaching.

We can change our basic teaching strategy of task analysis, least-to-most assistive prompting, reinforcement and error correction to suit individuals on an individual basis.

For skills that involve a lot of physical movement and individuals who respond to physical guidance, **we can provide help in learning a new skill through *most-to-least assistive* prompting.**

In most-to-least assistive prompting, we provide more assistance on an individual's first attempts to do a step in a skill than we provide on later attempts to do the step.

For individuals who find it hard to learn a skill when we teach with a *whole task* approach – that is, teaching all steps in a skill each time we teach the skill – we can make learning the skill easier through *chaining*.

We can teach each step one at a time in the order in which the steps are usually done to complete the skill through *forward chaining*.

We can also teach each step one at a time in the reverse order in which the skill is usually done through *backward chaining*.

For individuals who do not respond to, or dislike, being prompted we can teach through *shaping*. **Remember that in *shaping*, we reinforce individual attempts at completing a skill only as each attempt comes closer to the desired skill than the previous attempt.**

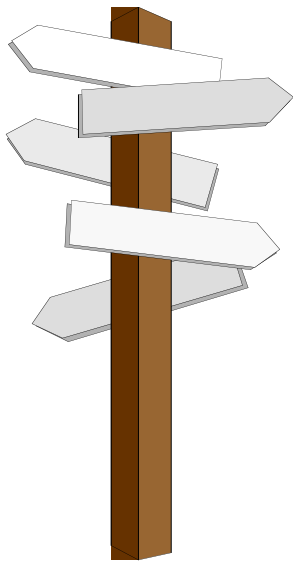
We also noted that when we cannot teach an individual to completely do a skill, it is still helpful to teach part of the skill so that the individual can *partially participate* in useful and enjoyable activities.

With all of the different teaching strategies, we discussed the importance of teaching the individual to *generalize* newly learned skills across situations in which the individual needs the skills. We can help individuals use skills across situations in which the individuals live, work and play by teaching in different situations.

Your Notes

Finally, we talked about the importance of *responsive teaching*. Responsive teaching is the basis of how we personalize teaching to suit individual learners: **we change how we teach *in response to* how well the individual learns from our teaching and how much the individual likes how we are teaching.**

Your Notes



Information Brief**Teaching Meaningful Life Skills**

No matter which teaching strategy we use with individual learners, it is important to remember the main goal of teaching.

The goal of teaching is to support individuals with disabilities in living as independently and enjoyably as possible. In order to reach this goal, we must make sure that what we teach is truly meaningful or functional for each individual.

One of the biggest problems in teaching programs in many settings is that individuals spend time being taught or doing things that have no real effect on helping them to live more independently or enjoyably. That is, individuals spend time in many programs doing things that do not help them to function in natural settings in which people live, work or play.

For example, have you seen adults with disabilities spending time putting pegs in pegboards as part of their teaching programs? The individuals put the pegs in pegboards, a support staff then empties the pegs out of the boards, and then the individuals put the pegs back in the boards. How useful is this activity for teaching people with disabilities to function in natural settings where people like you and I spend our time?

Your Notes

Surveys and observations of teaching programs around California and the United States in general have shown a number of common teaching activities in many programs that really do not help individuals with disabilities function more independently.

Besides being taught to put pegs in pegboards, teenagers and adults with disabilities are often observed being instructed to color in children's coloring books, put three-piece puzzles of cartoon characters together, string toy beads on a string, and put plastic circle rings on a ring stack.

Do these activities help the individuals to do useful things with their peers without disabilities? Or do these activities simply provide individuals with something to do during teaching programs that have no useful impact on the individuals' lives outside of the teaching situation?

To make sure we teach skills that truly support individuals with disabilities in **learning skills that will help them live more independently and enjoyably**, we can follow several important guidelines in selecting the skills we teach.

One of the best guidelines for making sure that what we teach is meaningful for a individual is that: ***the skill we are teaching a learner would be performed for the learner by someone else if the learner could not do the skill by him or herself***

For example, if an individual could not brush his or her teeth, would someone else brush the individual's teeth? Someone else would brush the person's teeth because teeth brushing is an important part of good hygiene.

Your Notes

With this guideline, there are many useful skills that we can identify to teach to individuals. One of the best examples is self-care skills. If individuals do not do self-care skills such as putting on deodorant, combing their hair, brushing their teeth, etc., support staff would do these things for consumers in order to promote good personal hygiene.

Most of us prefer to do self-care activities for ourselves rather than having someone else do the activities for or to us. The same holds true for many individuals with disabilities. This is another reason the guideline is a good one for selecting meaningful teaching activities: most people prefer to have the skills to take care of themselves.

A second guideline for making sure what we teach a individual is really meaningful is: ***the more often a skill is needed by someone, the more important it is to teach the person to do the skill.***

For example, think about: (1) an individual who does not know how to greet people when he or she sees a person for the first time each day and, (2) the individual who is being taught how to identify the months in which certain holidays occur.

Your Notes

Naming the months of holidays is important. However, this skill is not used nearly as often as greeting people every day. Which skill would be more useful for an individual to know how to do as part of the individual's day-to-day life?

The third guideline concerns the degree to what we teach is *age appropriate*.

From a teaching point of view, skills that we teach to individuals are more likely to be meaningful for individuals if the skills are the same skills used by people without disabilities who are of the same general age.

For example, think about the situation noted earlier in which an adult with disabilities is being taught to put pegs in a pegboard. Is putting pegs in a pegboard something that we see many adults doing in natural settings? Putting pegs in a pegboard is not something many adults do very often, if at all. Teaching adults with disabilities to put pegs in a pegboard means that we are teaching something that is not age appropriate and not very meaningful.

Your Notes

Teaching individuals with disabilities age appropriate skills not only helps individuals to take an active part in normal communities and activities, it also helps individuals to be accepted by others in their communities.

Think about a situation in which an adult with a disability has been taught how to play with a toy truck. If the adult plays with a toy truck in a community park, other people in the park are likely to shy away from the individual – because people are not use to seeing adults play with toy trucks. On the other hand, if the individual has been taught to shoot a basketball or feed birds in the park, other people are not as likely to shy away from the individual. It is common to see adults shoot a basketball or feed birds in a park. These skills are more age appropriate for adults than playing with a toy truck.

Your Notes

The issue of age appropriateness often raises some debate. Although it is more meaningful to teach age appropriate skills, some people may prefer to do some things that are not viewed as age appropriate.

A general suggestion is that we should try to teach skills that are age appropriate because they are most meaningful for people. However, during leisure time when people choose what they want to do, opportunities to participate in many things should be offered. **If people choose to do things that are not age appropriate during their leisure time, then that would be their choice.**

The suggestion should not be viewed as a mandate, but something to keep in mind. DSP staff should decide the issue of age appropriateness in light of the wishes of the individual, his or her support team and the values and practices of their agencies.



Your Notes

To make sure what we teach is age appropriate, we must think about both the skills we are teaching and the materials we use during teaching. To be age appropriate, the skills should meet the guidelines we are talking about here. For materials used in teaching to be age appropriate, the materials must be the same – or at least very similar to – the materials that an individual's age group peers would normally use when applying their skills during an activity.

Your Notes



A fourth guideline for making sure what we teach to individuals with disabilities is meaningful is: ***the skills can be used to support the learner in getting something the learner wants, or getting out of something the learner does not want, without challenging behavior.***

In another session on Positive Behavior Support, we talked about how challenging behavior often serves a communication function or purpose. In many cases, challenging behavior occurs because an individual is telling us she or he wants to do something or does not want to do something. We can help individuals avoid challenging behavior by teaching them ways to communicate what they want and do not want that are similar to the ways all of us express our desires.

Think about the situation in which an individual becomes tired when a DSP is teaching the individual to brush his or her teeth. The individual may slap at the DSP because the individual has learned that by slapping, the DSP will stop the teeth brushing (for example, to avoid being slapped again or to carry out a behavior program). One way to prevent or stop slapping in such a situation would be to teach the individual a better way to say she or he is tired and wants a break. We could teach the individual to say or sign “break” or “stop”, and then continue teaching teeth brushing after the break.

Your Notes

The fifth and final guideline for making sure what we teach is meaningful for the individual is the most important, and relates to all the other guidelines. **Specifically, we should teach skills that lead to *natural outcomes* for the individual.**

Teaching for natural outcomes means that we teach skills to individuals that support them in doing and achieving things that people do in the natural settings in which they live, work and play. These outcomes are the main reason we teach; they support people with disabilities in living independently and enjoyably.

As an example, a natural outcome of learning how to dial a telephone is to talk to someone at a time when the individual wants to talk to the person. A natural outcome of learning how to make a pizza is that you might eat it after you cook it.

Your Notes

All of our teaching efforts should be directed to supporting individuals in obtaining natural outcomes that result from being able to do the skills that we teach. At first we may have to build other outcomes into our teaching programs, such as an individual receiving praise from a support staff as the individual learns some steps of a skill. However, the final goal is to support the individual in learning a skill. The individual can then use the skill to obtain the natural outcomes in communities in which the individual lives, works or plays.

Your Notes

Information Brief**Developing Meaningful Teaching Plans**

For many of us, what and how we teach comes from an individual's individual teaching plan. That is, the individual and his or her support team develops a written plan that includes how and what we should teach. How teaching plans for individuals are developed is a very important part of making sure we teach skills that are truly meaningful for individuals.

To make sure teaching plans are developed such that the plans support individuals with disabilities in learning meaningful skills, there are several key steps that are helpful for developing plans.

The first step in developing a meaningful teaching plan is to make sure that everyone who will be carrying out the plan to teach an individual is involved in developing the plan. Most of us carry out duties and enjoy the duties more if we have some say in what we will be doing. The same hold trues for carrying out teaching plans.

A very good way to make sure the goals of teaching plans lead to individual outcomes that support the individual in living as independently and enjoyably as possible is to make sure teaching plans are *person centered*.

As discussed in other classes, a key part of being person centered means teaching plans are developed by the individual and people who know him or her best. From a

Your Notes

teaching point of view, the DSPs who will be carrying out the teaching plans will know a great deal about the individual's likes and dislikes.

The second step is to make sure the teaching plans are developed to support individuals in achieving natural outcomes. The goal of all teaching programs should be to support individuals in achieving outcomes that individuals want and can use in natural settings. It is these outcomes that support individuals in living as independently and enjoyably as possible.

The third step in developing meaningful teaching plans involves how the teaching will occur as part of the plan. *How* teaching will occur relates to the teaching materials and strategies that will be used during teaching. We have talked about making sure teaching materials are meaningful by using materials that are the same or very similar to the materials that are normally used in natural activities of living, working and playing.

We have also talked about many types of teaching strategies in this and earlier classes. Remember that we try to choose a teaching strategy that: (1) is effective in terms of truly supporting the individual in learning the skill, (2) is liked by the individual and, (3) the teacher is comfortable using.

The final step to help develop meaningful teaching plans is to make sure the plans tell when and how often the teaching plans should be carried out. Generally, the more we teach, the more likely it is that individuals will learn meaningful skills.

Your Notes

Information Brief

Implementing Meaningful Teaching Plans

Of course, a teaching plan is useful for an individual only to the degree that the plan is carried out. **There are two main points to look for in carrying out a teaching plan.**

The first point is to make sure the plan *is carried out as written*. If teaching plans are not carried out as written, then we cannot evaluate if the plan is working to help the individual learn meaningful skills. Carrying out a teaching plan as written is also important to make sure everyone carries out the plan in the same way. If different people teach in different ways, then it will be harder for the individual to learn meaningful skills.

The second main point in carrying out a teaching plan is that teaching should be *responsive*. That is, a teaching plan should be carried out or changed in response to what the individual does. If an individual does not make progress in learning a meaningful skill or does not like how teaching is occurring, then the teaching plan should be changed.



Your Notes

Information Brief

Supporting Individuals in Maintaining Meaningful Skills

Your Notes

In many teaching plans, what an individual should do to show she or he has learned the skill being taught is written into the plan. This is often referred to as the mastery criterion or mastery level for showing that an individual has learned a skill. Teaching programs should be continued until the teacher has taught the individual to the level noted in the plan. However, even when an individual shows she or he has learned the skill being taught, the teacher's job is not over. That is, **the teacher should then support the individual in *maintaining* the skill.**

Maintaining a newly learned skill means that an individual can continue to use the skill over time. In one sense, maintaining a meaningful skill is like remembering how to do something for long periods of time.

Once a person has learned a meaningful skill as a result of a teaching plan, it should not be assumed that the individual will maintain or remember how to use the skill. Rather, the individual should be *taught* to maintain the skill.

There are two good ways to support a individual in maintaining a newly learned skill. The first way is to provide opportunities to practice the skill. DSP can help a individual practice a newly learned skill by conducting a teaching session with the individual every now and then even when the individual has already learned how to do the skill.

A second way to support an individual in maintaining a newly learned skill is to make sure the individual has opportunities to use the skill in the natural settings in which the person lives, works or plays. Part of our teaching plans should involve supporting individuals in having opportunities to use their newly learned skills in natural settings in which the skills are normally used.



Your Notes

Key Word Dictionary

Teaching Strategies: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills

Session #8

Age Appropriate

Learning and doing things that are similar to what people without disabilities of the same age group usually do. When teaching skills to individuals with developmental disabilities, it is usually in the best interest of the individuals to teach skills that are the same skills that other people their age learn and do.

Meaningful Skills

Skills that help individuals live their lives in an independent and enjoyable way. All teaching programs should teach skills that are meaningful to the individual learner.

Meaningful Teaching Materials

Using materials that have importance to the individual (for example, materials known by the individual, things which are reinforcing to the individual).

Meaningful Teaching Plans

Plans which focus on skills that: (1) individual could not do for him or herself; (2) can be used often; (3) teach age-appropriate skills; (4) support an individual in getting something wanted or avoid something unwanted without challenging behavior; and (5) that lead to natural outcomes.

Natural Outcomes

Natural outcomes refers to achieving things in natural settings in which people live, work and play. Natural outcomes are the goal of teaching: to support people with disabilities in doing things in settings in which people naturally live, work and play. For example, drinking coffee is the natural outcome for making it or buying it at a coffee shop. Gaining natural outcomes helps people live independently and enjoyably.

Person-Centered

Supporting people with disabilities in making their own choices for everyday and major lifestyle decisions.

Skill Maintenance

Refers to a person being able to perform a skill long after the person has learned the skill. Teaching programs should be set up to help people do the skills for a long time – to *maintain* the skills over time.

If You Want to Read More About Teaching Strategies: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills

Brown, L., Branston, M.B., Hamre-Nietupski, S., Pumpian, I., Certo, N., & Gruenewald, L. (1979).

A strategy for developing chronological-age-appropriate and functional curricular content for severely handicapped adolescents and young adults. Journal of Special Education, 13, 18-90.

Evans, I.M., & Scotti, J.R. (1989).

Defining meaningful outcomes for persons with profound disabilities. In F. Brown & D. Lehr (Eds.), Persons with profound disabilities: Issues and practices (pp. 83-107). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Green, C.W., Canipe, V.S., Way, P.J., & Reid, D.H. (1986).

Improving the functional utility and effectiveness of classroom services for students with profound multiple handicaps. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 3, 162-170.

Reid, D.H., Green, C.W., McCarn, J.E., Parsons, M.B., & Schepis, M.M. (1986).

Purposeful Training with Severely Handicapped Persons. Morganton, NC: Western Carolina Center.

Reid, D. H., Parsons, M.B., McCarn, J.M., Green, C.W., Phillips, J.F., & Schepis, M.M. (1985).

Providing a more appropriate education for severely handicapped persons: Increasing and validating functional classroom tasks. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 18, 289-301.

Snell, M.E. (Ed.). (1993).

Instruction of students with severe disabilities (4th ed.). New York: Merrill Publishing.

Westling, D.L. & Fox, L. (1995).

Teaching students with severe disabilities. New York: Merrill Publishing.

Worksheets and Activities

Teaching Plan and Individual Progress Record

Name: Vernon MayberryGoal: Vernon wants to do more for himselfObjective: Learn to shave himself by June 30th

"+" = independent "O" = Needs a prompt

Task Analysis:

	5/1	5/2	5/3	5/4	5/5	5/6	5/7	5/8	5/9	5/10
1. <u>Gets shaver</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. <u>Plugs in shaver</u>	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+
3. <u>Turns on shaver</u>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
4. <u>Shaves faces</u>	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+
5. <u>Feels for unshaven beard</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. <u>Turns off shaver</u>	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+
7. <u>Puts shaver away</u>	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
8. _____										
9. _____										
10. _____										
11. _____										
12. _____										
13. _____										
14. _____										

Optional Activity: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills

Think of individuals whom you have observed in different teaching activities.

What are some of the activities you observed that did not seem to be skills that the individuals could use to live more independently in natural communities in which people without disabilities live, work or play?

What are some of the activities you observed that seemed to be building skills that the individuals could use to live more independently in natural communities in which people without disabilities live, work or play?